THE CASE OF John Palmer AND Thomas Symonds Gentlemen.

Executed near *Worceſter* on the 7th of *May* 1708, upon the Evidence of *Gyles Hunt*, who having obtain'd his own Pardon, charg'd them to have been concern'd with himſelf in the Murther of Mrs. *Alice Palmer*, Mother to the ſaid Mr. *John Palmer*, and her Maid.

With the Letter of the ſaid two Gentlemen to the Lord Biſhop of *Oxon*, aſſerting their Innocence, and giving an Account how they were prevail'd on to confeſs themſelves Guilty, by ſome who put them in hopes of a Pardon on that Condition.

His Lordſhip's ANSWER, with a Form of Prayer he compos'd and ſent them.

Mr. *Palmer*'s Letter to a Noble Lord in *London* on the Day of his Death, denying the Fact.

And Mr. *Palmer* and Mr. *Symonds*'s Dying Speeches; wherein they deny it upon their Salvation.

W. Musgrave.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A LETTER

From a Gentleman in the Country to his Friend in London, *with the following Papers.*

SIR,

HErewith you receive Mr. *Palmer* and Mr. *Symond's* Beginning and End; I mean as far as relates to their Misfortunes upon the Accusation of *Giles Hunt*. I cannot positively learn whether Mr. *Symonds* made use of his Speech at the Tree, or not, but it's certain Mr. *Palmer* read his, and they both left them under their own Hands. After *Symonds* was executed, Mr. *Dean* the Ordinary demanded of *Palmer*, upon his Salvation or Damnation, Guilty or Not? Who thereon reply'd, Not Guilty. Mr. *Palmer*, after the return of his Wife, wrote a Letter to a Peer in *London*, dated the 7th of *May* 1708. I do not send you that, because it may not be convenient; I mean, his Honour perhaps may be angry. Mr. *Palmer* and *Symonds* with their own Hands left me the Originals, from which you have the Copies exactly taken, and made it their dying Request, that they might be printed, to the End the World might

underſtand their Caſe; and to that end I have, Sir, communicated them to you for your Judgment; and they may, if you pleaſe, be printed in *London*; otherwiſe upon your returning them to me by the Coach, I will endeavour to have it perform'd at *Briſtol*. I hope, Sir, you will not think me over earneſt, it being a Promiſe made to thoſe now (I can't ſay in their Graves, yet) out of this World. I humbly requeſt you will favour me with a Line, by the next Poſt, that I may know you have receiv'd this Packet.

Sir,

Your moſt obedient humble Servant,

May 10. 1708. R. W.

BRITISH MUSEUM

The

THE

CASE

OF

John Palmer
AND
Thomas Symonds } *Gentlemen.*

John Palmer lived at *Libbery*, in the Pariſh of *Grafton*, in the County of *Worceſter*: *Thomas Symonds* at *Wyer Piddle* in the ſaid County, four Miles diſtant. *Alice Palmer*, Widow, living at *Upton Snodgbury* in the ſaid County of *Worceſter*, and Mother to the aforeſaid *John Palmer*, was on the 7th Day of *November* 1707, moſt inhumanely Murthered, as alſo was her Servant *Heſter Loxley*, her Houſe Rifled, and afterwards ſet on Fire, ſuppoſed to be done with a deſign to ſtifle the Barbarity.

The 20th of the ſaid Month *November*, in the Year aforeſaid, one *Gyles Hunt* was taken on ſuſpicion of being guilty of the aforeſaid Murder, Robbery, and Fire; the ſaid *Hunt* was bloody; and, on the ſaid 20th of *November*, in the Evening, the Goods of the ſaid Mrs. *Palmer* were found upon him the ſaid *Gyles Hunt*.

The aboveſaid Mr. *Palmer* receiving ſuch Intelligence, came to *Worceſter*, reſolv'd to proſecute the ſaid *Hunt* to the utmoſt Extremity, and brought along with him ſome Pewter Plates that were his Mothers, and ſav'd out of the Fire, to compare with thoſe found upon the ſaid *Hunt*. Whereupon the ſaid *Gyles Hunt* Impeached the ſaid Mr. *Palmer*, Mr. *Symonds*, and with them, one *William Hobbins*, as Partners with him, the ſaid *Hunt*, in the ſaid Villany. And on the Evidence of the ſaid *Gyles Hunt*, they, the ſaid *Palmer* and *Symonds*, were on the 21ſt of *November* 1707, committed to the Goal of the Out County of *Worceſter*, and there remain'd and took their Tryals, the Aſſizes following, for a Complication of Facts, as upon their Deaths they declar'd unjuſtly laid to their Charge. They receiv'd Sentence of Death, and order'd to be hang'd in Irons.

The Day fixed for Execution was the 16th of *April* 1708. Between Sentence and which Day the Priſoners had the Honour of being viſited by the Reverend Father in God, *William*, Lord Biſhop of *Oxon*, who ſtrenuouſly Exhorted them as the firſt Step to Salvation, to make an ingenuous Confeſſion. And on or about the 14th Day of the ſaid Month, *April*, the Reverend Mr. *George Maſon*, and Mr. *Thomas Symonds*, Attorney at Law, did, as they pretended, by the conſent of the Biſhop of *Oxon*, aſſure the ſaid Mr. *Palmer* and *Symonds*, That if they would make a Confeſſion, his Lordſhip would obtain them a Reprieve, and afterwards would go to *London* and never leave Her Majeſty until he had obtain'd them a Pardon.

Pardon. Upon which the ſaid *Palmer* and *Symonds* did write ſomething in the nature of a Confeſſion, and were Reprieved to the 7th of this Inſtant *May*. *Hobbins* was executed the 16th of *April* laſt, and with him one *John Allen* likewiſe, condemned upon the Evidence of the ſaid *Gyles Hunt*. They both with their laſt Breaths denied the reſpective Facts for which they died.

The 7th of this Inſtant *May*, *John Palmer* and *Thomas Symonds* were guarded from the Caſtle of *Worceſter* to the Common County Gallows, and were there both executed; and both, according to their own Expreſſions, died innocently. After Mr. *Symonds* was turned off, Mr. *Dean* the Ordinary demanded of Mr. *Palmer* if he was guilty of, or was any ways privy or conſenting to the murther of his Mother? Who with the greateſt Aſſeverations aſſerted his Innocency. They both with *Hobbins* hang in Irons at *Upton-Snodgbury*, near to the Houſe where the Fact was by *Hunt* and his Accomplices committed.

A Copy of a Letter from Mr. Palmer *and Mr.* Symonds *to his Lordſhip the Biſhop of* Oxon, *taken from the Original*, May 3d. 1708.

My good Lord,

WE acknowledge your Lordſhip's Condeſcenſion in viſiting us afflicted Priſoners, and your Lordſhip well knows our Innocency ſtood Proof againſt many Aſſaults, as well made by your Lordſhip as others of the Clergy; under our Hands we deny'd that barbarous, moſt inhuman and villainous Act of which we were by *Hunt* unjuſtly accus'd, and for which we were condemn'd. Upon a Promiſe of your Lordſhip's Favour by the Reverend Mr. *Maſon* and Mr. *Symonds* firſt as to a Reprieve, and a Pardon enſuing, our Thoughts, Death, that horrid and ignominious Death, a Gallows and Irons our Sentence, were diſtracted, and your Lordſhip's Ambaſſadors having the Advantage of Time, corrupted our Integrity, debauch'd our Innocency, and extracted Bad out of Good. Your Lordſhip's Abſence, and what we were prevail'd upon to give under our Hands, have created us more Uneaſineſs than even our Condemnation it ſelf; theſe Expreſſions cannot be repugnant to your Lordſhip's Charity, ſince from dying Men, (paſt Hopes) they are offer'd. *Gyles Hunt*'s Evidence we both declare to be falſe, malicious and unjuſt, and beſeech the Almighty to remit his Treſpaſs againſt us. We beg your Lordſhip's Prayers and Care of *Palmer*'s Children by his firſt Wife,

and

and when our Innocency appears they may inherit our Eſtates perſonal and real. We are, my Lord, with the deepeſt Humility,

My Lord,

Your Lordſhip's moſt obedient,

moſt afflicted and diſtreſſed Servants,

John Palmer,

Tho. Symonds.

POSTSCRIPT.

My Lord,

Mr. *Samuel Aſtley*, Paſtor of *White-Lady-Aſton*, ow'd me laſt *Lady-Day* Four Pounds for Half a Years Rent, I beg your Lordſhip that my Brother's Children may have the ſame.

Tho. Symonds.

A Copy of a Letter from his Lordſhip the Biſhop of Oxon *to Mr.* Palmer *and Mr.* Symonds, *taken from the Original,* May 3. 1708.

Gentlemen,

MY Concern for your Souls has been ſo great, that I can hardly deſire yours ſhould have been greater, and I would to God the Conſideration of your miſerable Condition had produc'd as many Sighs and Prayers from you as it has from me. I am griev'd at your Letter, which I receiv'd this Evening, ſince it confirms what I had heard, and indeed had too much Reaſon to believe of you, That you have retracted the firſt happy Step you made towards Repentance and Reconciliation with God, that Confeſſion of your Guilt which you gave under your own Hands, and which I am ſure was not extorted from you by me, any otherwiſe than by telling you how impoſſible it was for you to obtain Pardon from God without Repentance, and how neceſſary a part of Repentance Confeſſion was in your Caſes; I did promiſe upon your making that firſt Step I would endeavour to get you a Reprieve, that you might have Time to perfect that great Work, and aſſur'd you of my poor Aſſiſtance in it, and I was as good as my Word; but as to

to my giving you any Hopes of a Pardon, I call Heaven and Earth to witneſs that I never flatter'd you with any ſuch thing. I hope Mrs. *Prat* has given you a true Account of the Words I ſpoke to her and Mr. *Symonds*, which, as I am inform'd, have been perverted, to your Prejudice and mine; ſhe was declaring her Belief of your Innocency, to which I reply'd, That if I were as much ſatisfy'd of your Innocency as ſhe ſeem'd to be, and as I was of your Guilt, I would go to *London* and throw my ſelf at Her Majeſty's Feet, and beg for your Pardon; theſe were my Words, and whoever repreſented them otherwiſe abuſed both you and me. By thoſe whom you call my Ambaſſadors, I ſuppoſe you mean Mr. *Maſon* and Mr. *Symonds*, (the latter of which was not known to me till he brought me a Meſſage from you) they are both your Relations and Friends, and were firſt ſent from you to me; they had, as I hear, at your Deſire, been aſſiſting to you before, and I believe ſerv'd you very faithfully; they will both, I dare ſay, do me the Juſtice to own that whenever I ſent them to you to preſs you to a Confeſſion, I always directed them to charge it upon your Conſciences, as I had done my ſelf before, not to accuſe any or your ſelves wrongfully for any Conſideration; who they are that have prevailed with you to retract that Confeſſion you beſt know; but take my Word, next to thoſe that engaged you in the horrid Crimes for which you have been convicted, thoſe will prove your worſt Enemies that have prevailed with you to deny your Confeſſion of it. Both your Requeſts with relation to Mr. *Palmer*'s Children ſhall be faithfully performed, to the utmoſt of my Power. All that I can do farther for you is, to beg you, for the Sake of your immortal Souls, to employ the little Time which is yet before you to better Purpoſes than you have done that, which I fear you have

done worſe than trifle away, make a full and open Confeſſion of your Guilt, take Shame to your ſelves, give Glory to God, throw your ſelves down before him in the humbleſt Acknowledgments of your Vileneſs, the moſt earneſt Petitions for his Pardon; give him no Reſt, nor your ſelves any, Day or Night, but ſpend thoſe few that are remaining in Tears and Prayers, and abhorring your ſelves in Duſt and Aſhes, if happily the Wickedneſs of your Hearts may be forgiven, and God may ſhew ſome Mercy upon you; to his Grace and Mercy you are committed by

Your truly afflicted Servant,

WILLIAM OXON.

A

PRAYER

Deliver'd to Mr. Palmer *and* Mr. Symonds, *by his Lordſhip the Biſhop of* Oxon, *being writ with his Lordſhip's own Hand.*

GReat and Glorious God, look down in Pity and Compaſſion upon the Vileſt of Sinners, who have provoked Thee by a long Courſe of Wickedneſs and Impenitance, to ſuffer us to fall into thoſe heynous crying Sins, for which we are juſtly Sentenc'd to Temporal Death, and deſerve to ſuffer that which is Eternal. We acknowledge the Righteouſneſs and Equity of Thy Threats, that whoſoever ſheddeth Man's Blood, by Man ſhall his Blood be ſhed; that the Wicked and Bloodthirſty ſhall not live out half their Days; that Murderers ſhall have their Portion in the Lake, that burns with Fire and Brimſtone, for ever. We acknowledge the Juſtice of Thy Providence, in diſcovering thoſe unnatural and barbarous Crimes which we committed ſecretly in the Night, and in bringing us to open Shame and

Punishment for them here. We acknowledge and adore Thy Goodness and tender Mercy, in allowing us some time to repent of them, and apply our selves to Thee for pardon and forgiveness, that we may not be Eternally damn'd for them hereafter. O help us to employ this time to the best Purposes, that we may not by our Abuse of it aggravate our Guilt and Condemnation. What shall we say unto Thee, O Thou Preserver of Man? Shame covereth our Faces, we blush to lift up our Eyes towards Heaven, where the Cry of our Sins is come up before Thee, even the Voice of Innocent Blood cries for Thy Vengeance against us; but Gracious Lord, hear not the Cry of our Sins, but the Cry of the Blood of Thy Son Jesus, which speaks better Things than that of *Abel's*, nothing but that Blood can expiate or cleanse us from our Iniquities; O wash our polluted Souls in that Fountain which thou hast opened for Sin, and for uncleaness. Give us deep Humiliation and Contrition, that Godly Sorrow for our Sins, which may work Repentance unto Life never to be repented of. Thou only knowest the Hearts of Men; and alone canst change them, O change these Stony Hearts of ours, and give us Hearts of Flesh, such broken Hearts as thou wilt not despise; let Thy Terrors awaken us before the Flames of Hell shall too late do it; humble us so under Thy mighty Hand, that Thou mayest in Thy due time lift us up. We have nothing to plead before Thee but Thine own Tender Mercies, and the Infinite Merits of our Saviour, who died to save Sinners, We, O Lord! are the chiefest of Sinners, but He is a mighty Saviour, able to save to the uttermost, *&c.* Let the Benefits of His Sufferings and Death be extended to us. Spare us O God most Holy, O Lord most mighty; and though Thou art pleased to give us up to Temporal Death, never deliver us into the bitter Pains of Eternal Death; but work in us, by Thy

Grace

Grace and Spirit, that bleſſed Change of Mind, that Renovation of our whole inner Man, that our Sins may be done away by Thy Mercy, and our Pardons ſeal'd in Heaven before we go hence and be no more ſeen. Hear us O merciful Father, pardon and anſwer us, and do abundantly more for us then what we are able to ask, or think, for the ſake of that Son of Thy Love, the Bleſſed Jeſus, in whoſe Name and Words we farther call upon Thee,

Saying,

Our Father, &c.

Mr. Palmer's *Letter to a Noble Lord at* London.

May 7. 1708.

My Lord,

MY poor unfortunate Wife, returned to me laſt Night, has reported your Honours Favours, and I pay your Lordſhip my moſt humble Thanks. My Lord, I am now a dying Man, and telling a Story can be of no Service; therefore the World, except cruel to the laſt Extremity, muſt believe me: In the Preſence of God Almighty, I vow I am innocent of the Fact with which I am charged by *Giles Hunt*, and for which I die, to wit the Murder of my Mother. My Lord, I have no nice Reſervations upon my Faith, and I fix my Salvation on the Truth of my Expreſſions; directly, or indirectly, I know nothing of the barbarous Murder, committed upon the 7th of *November*, upon the

the Body of my Mother and Maid-Servant: I humbly beg when I am gone, your Lordſhip will aſſiſt my Widow, if ſhe begs it, your Lordſhips known Juſtice and Honour encourages me to this Addreſs,

I am,

My Lord,

Your Honours moſt Obedient and Expiring Servant.

John Palmer.

Mr.

Mr. Palmer's
Dying Speech,
The 7th of May, 1708.

Gentlemen,

AS we are corrupt in Nature, ſo ſubject to the Temptations of our Vigilant Enemy the Devil; and, to my own Shame and Misfortune, I muſt acknowledge my Thoughts have been polluted, and my Life irregular, prone to Wickedneſs, and aukward in the Paths of Righteouſneſs, diſobeying the Almighty, and His moſt Juſt and Holy Commands, neglecting His Divine Precepts, and Sining in oppoſition to the Checks of my own Conſcience.

Pardon, O God! I beſeech Thee, as well my moſt ſecret as my publick Tranſgreſſions, put mine Offences far from me, and be not extream in marking what I have done amiſs.

The

The Charge, Gentlemen, I have made upon my ſelf extends no farther then the Frailties I doubt we are all, moſt of us, or at leaſt too many ſubject to, as Men conceiv'd in Sin, and brought forth in Iniquity; and as ſuch, without the extenſive Mercies of God the Father, and the Merits of our Saviour, God the Son, we muſt all be miſerably unhappy.

Pardon therefore, O God! our Iniquities, Pardon the Iniquities of our Fore-fathers, and take not Vengeance of our Sins, but graciouſly look upon our Afflictions, and pitifully behold the Sorrows of our Hearts; mercifully forgive the Sins of Thy People. O Son of *David* have Mercy upon us, graciouſly hear us, O Chriſt, graciouſly hear us, O Lord Chriſt.

Next, Gentlemen, give me leave by way of Admonition to obſerve to you, That the way to be happy in this World, is, with a due Diligence, to mind your future State; for whilſt your Thoughts are ſo employ'd, the Pleaſures and Debaucheries of this Life do not enſnare your Safety, nor deſtroy your Fortunes. The Service of your God, the Safety of your Souls, and an honeſt Proviſion for your Family, is all you ought to aim at.

Give me leave now, Gentlemen, to deſcend to the Crime with which I am accus'd, and for which on this Tree I am ſentenc'd to undergo that ſhameful and ignominious Death. I hope, Gentlemen, notwithſtanding the falſe and various Reports of me, you have ſome Charity and Faith remaining, and can credit the Words of an expiring Man. I am ſenſible that I muſt quickly account for all I here ſay, and therefore ſhall be cautious in my

Expreſſions. Bleſſed be God, my Afflictions have not deſtroy'd my Senſes.

This, Sirs, is my Caſe.

The 7th of *November* laſt my Misfortunes took Date; for in the Night belonging to that Day I loſt, O Miſerable me! I loſt the beſt of Mothers, and in that loſt my Life it ſelf.

God grant we may meet, and be eternally happy.

Gentlemen,

It is evident one *Giles Hunt* was the Murderer of my Mother; he was found bloody, and the Goods upon him; upon which, as a convincing Proof, he acknowledg'd himſelf to be an Actor, and on promiſe of a Pardon came to Confeſſion; and, as I underſtand by the Statute, was obliged to impeach two or more for the Safety of his own Life: But indeed, why he ſhould bring me into that number, I know not, unleſs to prevent my being a Thorn in his Side for ſo barbarouſly uſing my Mother. But, Gentlemen, I do aſſure you in that his Charge upon me he has committed a ſecond Murder: How many more he has ſo us'd I know not. Some of you undoubtedly ſaw *Hobbins* and *Allen* executed, and heard their laſt Words. I hope they were innocent, and that Almighty God receiv'd their Souls.

My good Friends and Neighbours, what I preſume you moſt liſten after is a Confeſſion, a Confeſſion reported to be under my Hand to the Lord Biſhop of *Oxon.* Somewhat, Gentlemen, I muſt acknowledge by and at the Perſuaſions and Importunity of Mr. *Maſon* a Divine, and

Mr. *S*-

Mr. *Symonds* an Attorney (his Lordſhip the Biſhop of *Oxon*'s Ambaſſadors) and their Promiſes as from his Lordſhip of a Reprieve, and an enſuing Pardon was ſaid; but therein I unjuſtly betray'd my Conſcience, diſhonoured my Integrity, and without the eſpecial Mercy of Almighty God damn'd my ſelf.

I beſeech my moſt merciful God to forgive me that raſh and inconſiderate Act, and pardon all thoſe who draw'd me thereto.

I ſhall, Gentlemen, only make a Remark or two, and thoſe very ſhort. Firſt, from the Time that *Hunt* acknowledg'd the Fact, I had by *John Hawkswood* of *Worceſter* ſome hours notice, if I had been guilty, to have made my Eſcape.

Next, Gentlemen, what can be imagined I could propoſe from committing ſo horrid a Murder upon my poor Mother, ſhe having no more than 36 l. a Year Joynture, and my ſelf at that time near upon 200 l. a Year, and 700 and upwards at Intereſt.

Gentlemen,

As I am a dying Man, I do aver to the beſt of my Knowledge, I never ſaw *Hunt*, *Hobbins* or *Allen*, before I came to Goal.

Gentlemen,

Thus briefly I have ſhow'd you the Hardſhips I ſuffer, and the Impoſitions laid upon me. God Almighty knows my Innocency, and I hope my unjuſt Sufferings in this

World, and on this Occaſion, will in ſome Meaſure attone for the Vanities of my Youth.

I praiſe God I am reconcil'd to the Sentence againſt me, moſt heartily and chearfully forgive all my Accuſers and Enemies, and beſeech Almighty God, that my Blood unjuſtly ſhed may not be charg'd upon them.

I ſay not Guilty, and beg your Prayers,

John Palmer.

Mr. Sym-

Mr. Symonds's
Dying Speech,
The Seventh of *May*, 1708.

Gentlemen,

I Hope you have more Charity than to measure my Guilt by my Sufferings.

The Evidence *Gyles Hunt* gave againſt me was untrue in all its Circumſtances. That Night Mrs. *Palmer* was murdered I lay with Mr. *Sheldon Stevens* of *Wyer-Piddle*, in his own Houſe. Gentlemen, What ſhould induce *Hunt* ſo wrongfully to accuſe me I know not; but I call God to witneſs, and upon my Salvation declare, I am innocent of the Fact for which I die, whether that of *Bradfourton* or *Upton Snodgsbury*.

Ballard, *Hobbins* and *Allen*, (charg'd Fellow Criminals with me) were all Strangers to me till committed to the Jail, from whence I now came; and even *Hunt* himſelf was never of my Acquaintance. This unfortunate Gentleman,

tleman, (by Marriage my Brother) Mr. *Palmer*, who ſhares in my hard and diſmal Fate, I do verily believe to be unjuſtly accus'd. Since he is here I leave him to ſpeak for himſelf.

John Crump of *Piddle* is cenſur'd upon what *Hunt* has ſwore. I affirm I never knew any ill of that Man.

Now, Gentlemen, give me leave to ſay ſomewhat on that occaſional Confeſſion made to the Biſhop of *Oxon*. And thus it was.

After our unhappy Sentence paſs'd, Endeavours were us'd to bring me (as expreſs'd) to an ingenious Confeſſion: (Bleſſed be God my Hands were not tinctur'd with that Blood.) About the 14th of *April* laſt Mr. *Maſon*, Schoolmaſter at *Feckenham*, and Mr. *Symonds* an Attorney, craftily renewed their Aſſaults, pretending an Authority from the Biſhop of *Oxon* for promiſing me a Reprieve, and an enſuing Pardon. Moreover Mr. *Symonds* inſtanc'd (by way of Encouragement) the Caſe of Mrs. *Biſs* of *Gloceſter*, who after Condemnation ſav'd her Life, by pretending ſhe would make a Confeſſion, though in Fact (it ſeem'd) ſhe had nothing to relate. Thoſe, and ſuch like gilded Promiſes and deluſive Arguments, with the Terrors of Death well ſet forth, a ſpeedy and ſuch a ſcandalous Death as this work'd upon the Weakneſs of my Nature, corrupted my Conſcience, and produc'd that Confeſſion, in it ſelf as falſe as can be: therein I diſhonoured my God, ſtanding in more dread of Man, who could only deſtroy the Body, than the Almighty and Immortal Being, in whoſe Power alone it is eternally to deſtroy both Soul and Body.

From which Death good Lord deliver me.

Gentlemen,

As Man born of a Woman, and ſo conſequently ſubject to the Vanities, and expos'd to the Temptations of this

this Life, I have many Sins to account for; yet hope, thro' the Merits and Mediations of my Blessed Saviour, to be happy in the other World.

Gentlemen, Let me exhort you all to live a Godly, Sober and Regular Life, and beg of Almighty God to preserve you from false Witnesses, and malicious Prosecutions.

It's decreed I must thus end my Days in the prime of my Age. I beseech Almighty God in his infinite Mercy to receive my Soul, and in his own good time to make my Innocency appear to the World.

Tho. Symonds.

FINIS.

EXHIBITION
OF THE
SEUM